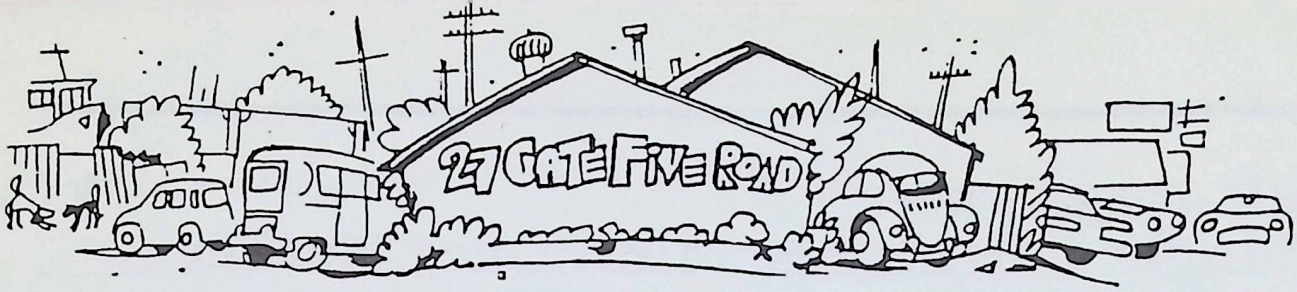

Spring 1989 Volume 4 Number 2

Fringes of Reason II: The Book

The *Fringes of Reason* was officially unleashed on the public mind on March 3, 1989. *Fringes*, a field guide to new age frontiers, unusual beliefs and eccentric sciences, was edited by Ted Schultz (former editor of *Whole Earth Review*) and designed by Becky Wilson. The idea for this Whole Earth Catalog of weird stuff grew out of Ted's special issue of *WER* (#52), which is our all-time best selling single issue (though it looks like the 20th Anniversary issue will soon claim that honor)

The book is taking off like a UFO; Ted has been featured on a couple dozen radio interviews with stations around the country, most notably a feature segment on National Public Radio's Fresh Air program. The Quality Paperback Book Club has made *Fringes* an Alternate Selection for August and rave reviews are beginning to pile in:

"For sheer addictive pull, Fringes is unbeatable."
Philadelphia City Paper

"There is a cheerfulness, a directness and an honesty in the treatment, all presented in a fresh graphic format."
Skeptical Inquirer

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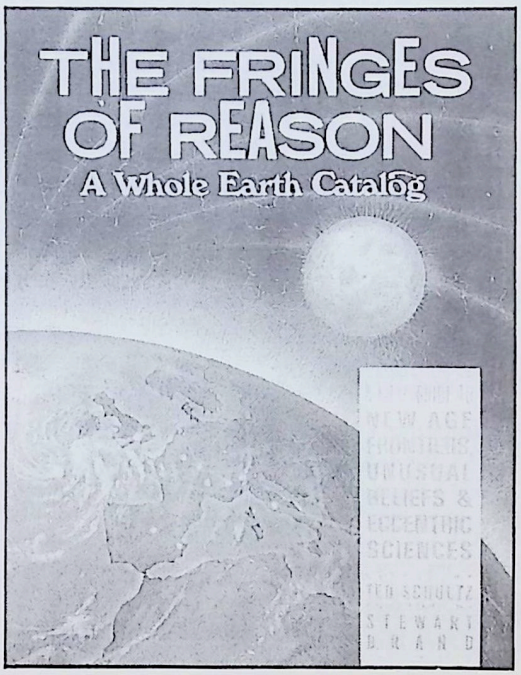


"Rips up the carpet on designer metaphysics and gleefully watches the roaches scuttle for cover."
LA Weekly

But enough sound bites - now you can buy the whole thing from us ($15 postpaid).

Meanwhile, back in Ithaca, new home of Ted and Becky, Spring has broken out. Ted is now a graduate student at Cornell working on evolutionary entomology. He just received word that he has earned a National Science Foundation scholarship to fund his work for the next 3 years. Becky is continuing her free lance graphics and computer graphics work for various publications and people around the country.

Can you figure it out?

Single Copy Sales: Mind Over Market

We are making serious progress in getting our information organized. This month we bring you our newsstand sales scorecard, courtesy of Dick Fugett's many tedious hours of reconstructive surgery on the data.

Newsstand sales make up about one quarter of our magazine sales income (the other 75% being subscriptions and back issue sales). Because its an important source of revenue for us, we're trying to learn what accounts for our success/failure in newsstand sales (cover design, editorial content, etc) This is a highly speculative endeavor, but an intriguing one.

So that you can play this game with us, we present to you here the newsstand sales figures for recent issues. Note that the most recent issues (from #60 on) are not included since we don't have the final data yet from our distributors (it takes about 6 months to know what really happened).

A few words of explanation:

AD means Alternative Distributor; these are smaller local types who place the magazine in places like health food stores. AD's sell a higher percentage of what they order because they reach our natural audience more effectively.

Warner is our national distributor; they place the magazine in places like Waldenbooks, supermarkets, etc.

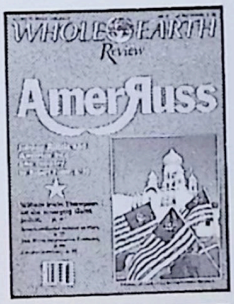
Sell % means the copies sold as a percentage of the total number of copies the distributor ordered. They only pay for the ones they sell; the rest they return/destroy for credit.

For the AD's, every 4% difference represents $1,000. For Warner, every 2% difference represents $1,000.

How to play the game: recall your favorite issues. Guess how well you think they would do on a newsstand. Look them up in the chart. Then try to figure out why they performed as they did. Send your humorous or serious answers to us. We'll report back in the next newsletter. Special Bonus Question: can you figure out why Issue 56 did so poorly? (no fair peeking at the cover).

Issue#/ Cover story	AD Sell %	Warner Sell %
52-Fringes of Reason	86%	39%
54-Long Snake Moan	84%	35%
55- Reality Club	83%	41%
57-Signal	81%	34%
53 AmeRuss	71%	30%
59-Robots	69%	25%
56-Drag Queen	59%	18%

#52



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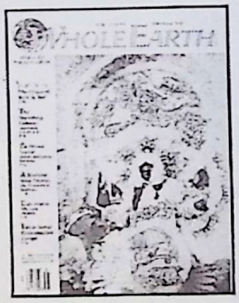

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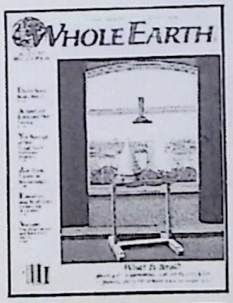

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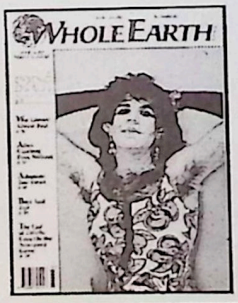

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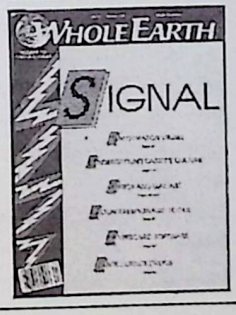
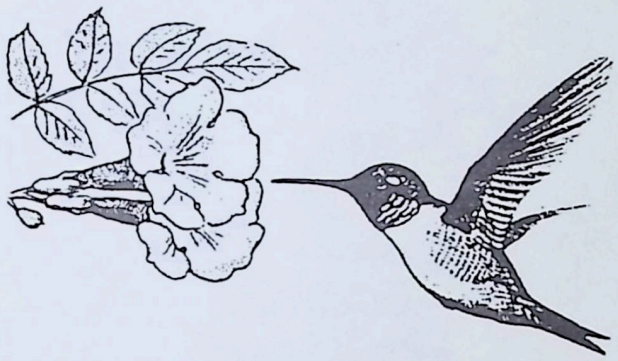


#57

Future Funding

Point, the non-profit parent of *Whole Earth Review*, has hired a fundraiser. For two months, Susan Frank will explore various avenues of raising money for Point's projects. This is all part of our efforts to do more long term financial plánning and stabilize the income side of our operations.



RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

Hummingbirds Block Volleyball

The opening of the 1989 Western Bioregion Volleyball season has been delayed due to the imminent birth of a pair of *Archilochus colubris*, better known as ruby-throated hummingbirds.

Ms. Hummingbird took to nesting in a low hanging branch near the endline of the western half of the court, well within the danger zone of overhits, especially this early in the season. The incubation period of hummingbird eggs is 16 days, and the young fly 22 days after birth. How long it takes them to learn to play volleyball is unknown.

It seems that this will become an annual event, as the female returns to the same place to nest every year. Conference officials were meeting as we went to press to discuss the implications of this event on the league.

Meanwhile, we have a birds-eye view of the nest from our kitchen window. The birds fly at 27-55 mph, depending on who you believe, beating their wings 55 times per second while hovering and 75 in forward gear. Makes volleyball seem downright lethargic.

Restoration Ecology Update

Your response to our request for contributions to our special issue on environmental restoration has been most heartening. We have raised $3,130 thus far from you, our loyal subscribers. Thank you! Please keep the support coming, and send us a check if you are able. Your support is a real morale boost for the entire staff. It is heartening to know you are there when we need you, willing to support hands-on information about how to restore our woods and meadows, streams and cities.

Editor Richard Nilsen has begun the process of following leads, contacting individuals and organizations and soliciting articles for the issue. This process is still in its early stages — we begin production about Thanksgiving, and need to have the articles in hand by early Fall. We need your help here too. This magazine has no assignment editor, travel budget or roving reporters. Can't afford 'em. You, dear readers, are our eyes and ears. This is one reason why you continue to learn about things in Whole Earth Review you won't find anywhere else.

If you know of local restoration stories, please let us know. Tear out the newspaper story, jot down the phone number, stuff it in an evelope and send it to us. We're interested in successes and failures, large or small.

Meanwhile, Harmony Books in New York is about to make us an offer on publishing a book version, based on the success of Signal and The Fringes of Reason. We anticipate that we will need additional funds beyond their advance to do the book the way we think it needs to be done, and we are continuing to solicit those funds from supportive individuals and organizations.

20th Anniversary Sellout

Our Twentieth Anniversary Issue (#61, Winter 1988) was the best selling issue we ever published. Our distributors re-ordered numerous times, taking every copy of the magazine we had. We are now in the process of trying to recover any unsold copies from these distibutors (copies returned to them by bookstores and newsstands) in order to establish an inventory for future requests from subscribers. It is too soon to know what kind of luck we are going to have and how many copies will be available. If you wish additional copies of this issue, please write and let us know. We'll do our best to fulfill your wishes. Copies are $5 each plus $1 for shipping.

Whole (Naked) Earth Pinned Up

Penthouse magazine reviewing *Whole Earth Review*? That is what a new subscriber told us in the letter accompanying his order. Now we get a lot of unusual letters full of all kinds of things people imagine we've done, but this seemed downright odd. None of us could remember being interviewed by or posing for **Penthouse**, but when we got our second inquiry we ventured to the newsstand to take a peek. Sure enough, sandwiched between the flesh of the March issue there's a review of several magazines, including *WER*. The review is actually reprinted from *Factsheet Five*, a publication that reviews magazines and 'zines, those quirky homemade magazines. Here is what they said about us:

The little magazine that time forgot, that the decades cannot improve. While time has wrought its changes on this publication, it still remains the repository of the best information to be found — not only on alternative cultures, but on mainstream culture as well. While it has a penchant for being painfully politically correct, WER is nevertheless a challenging and informative source of ideas, concepts, and cutting edge technologies. One issue alone is worth 20 of more mainstream magazines. The Whole Earth Review has somehow survived its own cliche's to become one of the few publications that thoughtful and curious people really shouldn't do without. Would be cheap even at twice the price.

I guess it's because we published the first naked pictures of Earth.

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